

DYING LIKE A MAN

By HOWARD WILLIAMS

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How long Bones, the vagabond, had been a country tramp before he reached London could only be guessed at by the butchers and fishmongers of Applegate market, where he took up his headquarters. He was a man of fifty when he first hung about, and he had the appearance of being "seasoned." No one ever asked Bones any questions, and he volunteered no information.

Some one called him Bones the first day he appeared, and the name stuck to him. He accepted it without remark. What is the odds to a vagabond whether he is called Bones or Jones?

It may seem curious that no one ever became sufficiently interested in Bones to draw him out or that some day when he longed for human sympathy he did not volunteer his story; but, as a matter of fact, he was only one of hundreds of vagabonds slouching along the streets of London. Why should any one of higher station care who he was or whence he came? And if he had related his history it might have been that of scores of others and would have brought neither sympathy nor sixpence.

Bones was inoffensive. He was also passably honest, and when kicked out of the way he took it as a matter of course. He was content with the shabbiest raiment and had not too hearty an appetite, so it came about that he was allowed to hang about the market without complaint. His lodgings were in vacant buildings, coalyards or doorways, and the only time he got full meals and a decent bed was when the police pulled him in and he was sent to the workhouse.

He had put in ten years in London, and there was no appreciable change in him. He was gray haired, stoop shouldered, ragged and red nosed, but he had been that on his arrival. Nor had there been any change in his plans. He had come to London to live out the remainder of his days, and he was doing it. If it ever occurred to him that some day he must land in the almshouse, die and be buried as a pauper, he said nothing about it and was not worried.

One day Bones was slouching along David street. He was not begging or sightseeing or looking after coal to be put in. He was simply vagabondizing and letting his feet take his body where they would. If a policeman had made an arrest, Bones would have had no curiosity. If the fire engines had come rattling up, he would not have halted and become a spectator. He had witnessed dogfights, street rows, fires and arrests so often that they no longer held any interest.

One who saw him dragging along with his eyes on the ground would have said that nothing but a kick from a truck horse could have aroused him, and yet a mere trifle did the business. Of a sudden a pet poodle pursued by a gang of boys ran up to Bones as if to ask for protection. He picked up the dog and carried it along, and, though threatened by the hoodlums, he clung to the canine. After walking two blocks he came upon a carriage containing a girl about ten years old. The poodle had escaped from the carriage as it was driving through Willow place, and the little one was crying piteously over her loss.

Bones walked directly to the vehicle and placed the dog in her arms, and the overjoyed girl reached out for his hand and exclaimed:

"Oh, you good, good man! You look ragged, but I know you're not bad. I'll give you some money, and if you'll come and see papa I know he'll find a place for you and help you along. My name is Minnie, and it was so good of you, and—"

But the driver shook his whip at the vagabond and started up his horses. For the rest of that day Bones was only outwardly Bones. He had been kindly addressed by a human being. He had been told that some one might help him upward. His hand had been shaken in gratitude, and he had been called a good man. There was something new here to hold his thoughts and turn over in his mind, and he was so preoccupied that he crept to his bed in a coalyard without having begged the usual crust.

It must be that I am a human being after all. If I hadn't been, the girl wouldn't have spoken as she did. To have some one shake hands with me, to call me a good man, to thank me for a service—I can't make it out. But it's come too late. I'm too old to change. Nothing could lift me up now, nothing give me back what I have lost. There's only one thing I can do, and that's to pray God I may die like a man—like the man I once was."

key, and after a careful reconnaissance Bones decided that an entrance might be effected after dark. He would have neither bed nor fire, but the poorest of the rooms would be comfortable for a vagabond.

When night came, Bones was on hand. It was not the first vacant house by a hundred in which he had taken up temporary quarters, and he knew the trick of prying open cellar windows. Once in the cellar, the light of a match showed him the way upstairs, and as he reached the kitchen he was surprised to find a bit of fire in the range and the remains of a meal on a shelf. Before giving the matter any thought he ate up all the food before him and hugged the range until he had ceased to shiver. Some one had been ahead of him. It was not a vagabond like himself, because there were the food and the fire, and thieves and burglars would have no call to enter empty houses. A half consumed candle showed that the tenant had been there for a night or two, and it was likely he had a key to one of the doors. Bones was somewhat mystified, but not frightened. With a lighted candle in his hand he set out to explore a little and decide which room to sleep in. After a look into the three or four rooms downstairs he mounted to the second story and had hardly reached the landing when he heard men's voices from one of the bedrooms, together with what seemed the sobbing of a child. Out went his candle, and he got down on hands and knees and crept along to listen at the door. There were two men and a child in that room, and the child was weeping and pleading.

No one will ever know what Bones thought or planned to do, as the door was suddenly opened by one of the men, and he was found crouching there. He did not run away. One look into the lighted room showed him an old table, two or three chairs, a bed of blankets and on the bed the little girl of the lost dog. He leaped into the room as the man started back, and as the girl recognized him and cried out the two kidnapers cursed.

There was half a minute when no one moved. Then one of the men rushed to the door and shut it, and both drew knives and advanced upon the vagabond. All her life the little girl will remember how his impassive face lighted up, how he suddenly grew straight and tall, how his eyes glistened as he seized one of the heavy chairs and began the battle. They were a pair of burly ruffians, and they had long, keen knives, but it was a fight lasting many long minutes. As they stabbed and thrust he beat them to their knees. They wounded him again and again, and he left a trail of blood as he shifted his position, but one of them was dying and the other had a broken arm before the old vagabond tottered and fell, with the broken chair still clutched in his fingers. The child saw it all with bated breath and wide open eyes, and, though she did not know of his hope, she saw that he died like a man—aye, like the bravest of men!

With his broken bones and bruised body and with the fear of the police in his heart the surviving ruffian made his way out of the house, and the child was left the long night with the dead. When morning came, she beat upon a window until attention was attracted and men broke in the door and rescued her. It was not the police who found the kidnapers, but old Bones. It was not a public officer who had eagerly sought a battle with the ruffians and yielded up his life after a heroic fight, but simply an old vagabond of Applegate market. And his eulogy and his epitaph were the words of the child who saw him do battle for her:

"He was old and dirty and ragged, but he was a man!"

The Politician as an Actor.

There are multitudinous small things which, as a little man, one would suppose must press heavily upon an eminent politician. He must be civil to all men—civilier perhaps to the fools than to any. The fool he has always with him—always. The eminent politician must serve as the especial butt to a vast and wonderful array of bores. How he must despise the large majority of his so called followers! With what scorn he must regard them in his heart! And yet how he has to go out of his way to solicit the favor of their vote and interest! How he has sometimes to palter with a lie—he must have! How he must be all things to all men!

He is an actor as much as any actor that ever trod the mimic stage, and he he sick or sad he has to give satisfaction to the audience in front if he would keep his situation. He has to struggle and strive to keep in his hands the ends of fifty different strings which are being pulled in fifty different directions and preserve his balance and his head amid them all.

And what is the end of it? What is the reward of the eminent politician? It is when one considers this question that one is amazed to think that any man should think it worth his while to pay the penalty of political greatness.—All the Year Round.

An Epitaph.

On the 10th of February, 1756, died a Miss Bassett at the age of twenty-three, who was buried in the churchyard of old St. Pancras and upon whose tomb the following lines were placed:

Go, spotless honor and unsully'd truth;
Go, smiling innocence and blooming youth;
Go, female sweetness joined with manly sense;
Go, winning wit that never gave offense;
Go, soft humanity that blessed the poor;
Go, saint-eyed patience from affection's door;
Go, modesty that never wore a frown;
Go, virtue and receive thy heavenly crown.
Not from a stranger came this heartfelt verse;
The friend inscrib'd thy tomb whose tea bedew'd thy Sarcas.

A GOOD PRESCRIPTION.

Laughter as a Stomach Cure and an Aid to Health.

Worry is but one of the many forms of fear, so that worry tends to the production of indigestion. Indigestion tends to put the body of the subject in a condition that favors worry. There is thus established a vicious circle which tends to perpetuate itself, each element augmenting the other.

It is necessary to secure a cheerful, wholesome atmosphere for the dyspeptic. He should eat his meals at a table where there is good fellowship and where funny stories are told. He should himself make a great effort to contribute his share of this at the table, even if it be necessary, as it was in one case under my care, for him to solemnly and seriously collect funny paragraphs from the press, and at first interject them spasmodically during lulls in the conversation at the table. The very efforts and determination of the man to correct his own silent habits at table, to correct his feelings of discouragement and worry, were in themselves a promise of success. The effort made was adequate to the obstacles to be overcome. He succeeded, and the spectacle of that man trying to be funny at table when he felt thoroughly discouraged and blue is one we shall never forget.

Laughing is in itself also a useful exercise from the standpoint of digestion. It stirs up all the abdominal organs, it increases the circulation of the blood, it increases peristalsis, it increases the secretion of gastric juices. Five minutes' deliberate laughing after each meal would be an excellent prescription for some people.—Family Doctor.

THE BIRTH OF JAPAN.

Curious Legend of the Creation Handed Down by the Japanese.

The following is the curious legend of the creation as it is told in Japan: Clouds formed the bridge on which once god Yzanagi and his spouse Yzanuma stood pondering on the riddle of existence, whether the beginnings of life lay slumbering in that sea of chaos. Yzanagi, apparently more enterprising than philosophically inclined, seized his shimmering spear and plunged it into the black and seething flood. Pulling it up again, he discovered seven salt drops on its diamond point, which, dropping, condensed and formed the island of Coscorosima.

Thereupon Yzanagi and his spouse selected the spot of earth which had thus been created as their permanent dwelling place and peopled it with innumerable genii of animal and plant life and spirits of the elements. And around this "palace of immortality" rose eight other islands—Awatsi, the island of foam; the mountainous Cho, Yamato, blessed with fruit; Yyo, unsurpassed in its beauty; the quinquagenary Tsukushi, Sado, rich in copper and gold; Yki, one of the pillars of heaven, and Oko, surrounded by three satellites.

Such was the birth of Japan, of that curious land of Fusiyama, with its amiable population of artist-artisans, its graceful tea-houses, its glistening silks, its grotesque dwarf figures, its white cranes and dreamy lotus ponds.—Harper's Magazine.

A Safe Age.

The insuring of one's life is one of those things which one is most apt to put off. There are few, however, who postpone what ought to be the inevitable until so late a period in life as did the tough old snacker of Grimsby. When he presented himself at the insurance office, he was naturally asked his age. His reply was, "Ninety-four." "Why, my good man, we cannot insure you," said the company. "Why not?" he demanded. "Why, you are ninety-four years of age." "What of that?" the old man cried. "Look at statistics, and they will tell you that fewer men die at ninety-four than at any other age."—London Business Illustrated.

Their Branch of Service.

"To what branch of the military service do captains of industry belong?" asked the recognized yet surviving joker of the party.

"I give it up," replied his victim wearily.

"To the artillery, because they're all 'big guns.' See? Ha, ha, ho, ho!"—Syracuse Herald.

Cool Trees.

It is not shade alone that makes it cooler under a tree in the summer. The coolness of the tree itself helps, for its temperature is about 45 degrees F. at all times, as that of the human body is a fraction more than 98 degrees. So a clump of trees cools the air as a piece of ice cools the water in a pitcher.

Rasping.

Barber—How's the razor, sir?
Customer—Didn't know I was being shaved.
Barber (dattered)—Very glad, I'm sure, sir.
Customer—I thought I was being sandpapered.—Pick Me Up.

Happily Married.

"I hope you have found happiness in marriage, dear."
"Oh, yes, I can do lots of things I didn't dare do when I was a girl."—New York Press.

Perseverance not only goes far to insure success, but also obtains honors for those who, although the less fortunate, have been the most diligent.

Somehow whenever we hear a man called an Adonis we long to hunt him up and smash his pretty nose.—Atchafson Globe.

The Art of Brevity.

The Spartans were distinguished for the brevity and conciseness of their speech. On one occasion during a terrible famine the inhabitants of an island in the Egean sea sent an ambassador to Sparta, who made a speech imploring its aid. He had hardly finished before the Spartans sent him back these words, "We did not understand the end of your speech and have forgotten the beginning."

The poor, starving people chose another spokesman and impressed upon him to make his request as brief as possible.

He therefore took with him a quantity of sacks, opened one before the assembly and said simply, "It is empty; fill it."

The sack was filled as well as the others, but the chief of the assembly said as he dismissed the ambassador, loaded with meal: "It wasn't necessary to inform us that the sack was empty. We saw it ourselves. Neither was it necessary to request us to fill it. We should have done it on our own account. Be less long winded next time."—Christian Endeavor World.

A Seared Corpse.

"It was, I think, at the Haymarket that one of the most amusing of unheard incidents occurred," says a writer in M. A. P. "The play was 'Romeo and Juliet.' Mrs. Scott Siddons was the Juliet of the occasion. All went well until the final scene. Paris was duly slain, and Juliet lay stretched upon her bier. Just then some of the scenery caught alight somehow, but some men from behind soon extinguished it. Juliet, with commendable presence of mind, did not move an eyelid, but the corpse of Paris was nervous. He raised himself to a sitting posture, then got upon his feet and fled from the stage. The danger being removed, his courage returned, and the audience was afforded the pleasing spectacle of a corpse crawling along the stage from the wings to take up the proper position for the final curtain. It was too tremendous an anticlimax to the tragedy of the play, and the house was simply convulsed."

Flowers and Poisons.

Ever since the days of that floral abomination, the green carnation, we have known that flowers are susceptible to the influence of drugs and can be made to change their colors by proper, or, rather, improper, treatment. This branch of floriculture has been pursued further by inquiring people, and it seems that plants are as liable to the effects of poisons as are human beings. If you give a flower too much chloroform, it will not agree with it. In the words of the operator, "it droops and dies." It is difficult to see what is the advantage of this particular study. Every one knows that flowers can be killed far too easily. If some scientific person would find a way of causing them to bloom all the year round in our climate, that would be something of a discovery—less scientific, perhaps, but much more acceptable.—London Tatler.

Obliging.

At a musicale where a priest was a guest a young woman with a robust soprano voice did most of the entertaining. She was very proud of her accomplishments and her musical education. She sang songs in German, Italian, French and English. When she appeared to have exhausted her repertory and the company present were wishing for a change in the programme, the clergyman paid her some compliments and added:

"Why, Miss Jones, I think you could sing an infinitum."
"I really don't know it," responded the obliging young woman, "but if the music is here I'll try it."—New York Times.

Growing Walking Canes.

Few men who use walking canes are aware that the growing of walking sticks is a special industry and that certain kinds of canes are not merely collected as they may be found growing in forests. One may find at any store where the sticks are sold many canes of almost precisely the same length, weight, shape and material. Canes having a tangle of roots at the handle, for instance, are much sold in England. They are grown by a "farmer" who makes it a specialty to trim and shape young ash plants.

Morse and the Telegraph Operator.

Immediately after the successful completion of the first transatlantic cable and the consequent celebrations, in which of course Cyrus W. Field bore a prominent part, Professor Morse had occasion to send a telegram from a small town in Ohio to his home in New York. He wrote out his message, presented it to the operator, who rapidly checked it off with his pencil and curtly demanded a dollar.

"But," said the venerable inventor, "I never pay for messages," and, seeing an inquiring look in the operator's eyes, added, "I am, in fact, the father of the telegraph."
"Then," said the operator, firmly convinced that he was being imposed upon, "why don't you sign your own name, Cyrus W. Field?"

Professor Morse when telling the story used to say that he was too humiliated to answer.

No Call For Leisure.

"What, you back to work, Pete? When I saw you fall off the building yesterday, I never expected to see you work again."
"I tought dat too, boss, but mah wife done let mah accident assurance explain last week."—Indianapolis News.

Pleasant While It Lasted.

"What would you do if you woke up some morning to find that you had inherited a million dollars?"
"I'd turn over on the other side and try to dream it again."—Chicago Record-Herald.

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